

## NATIONAL THREAT LANDSCAPE STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

*This assessment is intended to provide situational awareness of threats with potential national-level implications related to public order, public safety and the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. The information in this assessment is based on reporting from RCMP Divisions, law enforcement partners, searches conducted against RCMP holdings, and open source resources (current as of 28 September, 2021). The IMCIT continues to maintain visibility on emerging threats and will provide updates on a periodic or as required basis.*

### KEY POINTS

- There has been a notable increase in the number and impact of public order events resulting from campaigning during Canada's 44<sup>th</sup> General Elections, as well as from the implementation of vaccine passports and mandated vaccines by some employers throughout Canada.
- Potential threats to the vaccine roll out may occur in spontaneous incidents by dissenting or opportunistic individuals. The IMCIT has no new information to indicate any coordinated attempts to sabotage or disrupt the vaccine supply chain or its transport.

### THREATS TO PUBLIC SAFETY

#### **FISHERIES DISPUTE - ST. MARYS BAY, NOVA SCOTIA (NS)**

*Potential for unauthorized fishing and increased tensions between non-Indigenous and Indigenous fishers which could impact public or officer safety.*

In September of 2020, the Sipekne'katik First Nation community fishers launched a self-regulated lobster fishery that met opposition from non-Indigenous commercial fishers resulting in violence, property damage and arson.<sup>1</sup> The Sipekne'katik fishers previously advised that they intended to re-launch a fishery in June of 2021 in St. Marys Bay "outside of the federal commercial season and without federal licenses".<sup>2</sup> Until last month, the Sipekne'katik were operating a food, social and ceremonial lobster fishery that harvests at various times of the year. It is regulated by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and does not permit the sale of the catch.<sup>3</sup>

There have been a number of notable incidents in the area throughout this reporting period:

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Federal Policing National Intelligence – Ideologically Motivated Criminal Intelligence Team (IMCIT)

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- On September 9, 2021, a peaceful event was held to show solidarity with the Sipekne'katik fishery, which was attended by the Assembly of First Nations National Chief.<sup>4</sup> There was no conflict reported as a result of the event. (Of note, that same day, a second person was charged with arson in relation to the October 2020 fire in Middle West Pubnico<sup>5</sup> that destroyed the lobster pound where Mi'kmaw fishers were storing their catches.)
- On September 13, 2021, federal fisheries officers reduced on-water enforcement in the area near the Indigenous fishery, which news reports indicate resulted in non-Indigenous commercial fishers expressing frustration.<sup>6</sup>

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Currently there is no information to suggest public order events will occur in NS as they have in the past,<sup>8</sup> or that there could be spillover into other parts of the country.

On September 20, 2021, the Honourable Bernadette JORDAN, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard lost her re-election in her riding.<sup>9</sup> At the time of this writing, it is unclear what impact this could have on the evolving situation with fisheries once a new minister is named. In the past, JORDAN faced criticism related to the fisheries dispute.

#### **OLD-GROWTH LOGGING - SOUTHWEST VANCOUVER ISLAND, BRITISH COLUMBIA (BC)**

*Potential for continued criminality, solidarity actions and counter-protests which could impact public or officer safety.*

News reports indicate that, as of September 28, 2021, the injunction prohibiting the obstruction, impediment, or interference with logging has expired.<sup>10</sup> Since May of 2021, the RCMP's enforcement of the injunction has resulted in 1101 arrests,<sup>11</sup> making it the largest act of civil disobedience in Canadian history.<sup>12</sup> The number of arrests and issue of old-growth logging protection has gained global attention from environmental groups. NDP leader Jagmeet SINGH was also met with a small group of peaceful protesters calling for his support against old-growth logging while campaigning in Toronto, ON on September 16, 2021.<sup>13</sup>

During this reporting period, information from E Division on the blockade camps noted tactics being used by protesters to breach the injunction included locking devices<sup>14</sup> in trenches and the use of tripods to block forest service roads.<sup>a</sup> <sup>15</sup> There was concern that these tactics put protesters and police at risk for injury.<sup>16</sup> A September 4, 2021, news release indicated that lifesaving action needed to be taken by RCMP officers to remove protesters from trenches due to weather conditions.<sup>17</sup> A helicopter, which may have had its call signs or markings illegally obscured, dropped supplies to the protesters, some of which included materials to make locking devices.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Locking devices, in this space, refer to where individuals secure their arms into concrete holes, which is a common tactic used to delay police response and allow time for certain actions to be captured by media. Safe removal from such devices can take hours. Locking devices attached to individuals in trenches and on tripods complicate the removal process, as obstruction removal specialists may be required. Tripods are set up on forest service roads to obstruct entry.

Open source information suggests that protesters are celebrating a recent judge's ruling against extending the injunction, which they perceive is precedent setting.<sup>19</sup> Without the injunction, police are still able to arrest people in the area for committing crimes while on patrol.<sup>20</sup> The IMCIT assesses that, based on social media, protesters plan to remain in the area and any arrests made by officers will be perceived negatively and could spark solidarity actions across the country.

#### **CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES - NATIONAL MOBILIZATION**

*Potential for criminality and potential for Canada-wide actions.*

There have been no new details regarding environmental groups attempting to coordinate separate nationwide "Days of Action" in October of 2021.<sup>21</sup> It is anticipated that such events will be widely publicized through social media leading up to the actions, which will include public order events across the country. While the majority of these events are likely to be peaceful, past tactics by some of the groups have included blocking bridges and causing traffic disruptions at intersections. In one case, on September 25, 2021, an individual was arrested for mischief after the Vancouver chapter of the group "Extinction Rebellion" blocked traffic for several hours.<sup>22</sup> A news report on this protest indicates the group advised the media that the protest on September 25 was part of a lead up to the October Canada-wide actions.<sup>23</sup>

Environmental groups have seized the opportunity presented by extreme weather across Canada, the recent federal election, and the release of a report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to further their narratives.<sup>24</sup> Peaceful protests by global environmental groups took place on September 24, 2021, to pressure policymakers to take action on global warming.<sup>25</sup>

Based on the outcome of the Canadian federal election, narratives related to perceived government inaction and unfulfilled promises of Liberal leaders persist in this space. Due to increased attention to the issue of climate change and the easing of COVID-19 restrictions in several provinces, the IMCIT assesses that public order events related to climate issues are expected to continue.

#### **"WHITE LIVES MATTER" MARCHES AND POSTERING CAMPAIGN**

*Potential for solidarity actions and counter-protests that could impact public or officer safety.*

"White Lives Matter" (WLM) public order events have been advertised internationally since March of 2021. WLM posters have been observed in several Canadian cities, but to date, public order events remain confined to Ontario with protests occurring monthly since April of 2021. Open source information indicates that attendance at these events has been minimal with no reported incidents of violence. Global protests by WLM groups are set to occur monthly throughout the remainder of 2021.

In Toronto, ON, individuals who attended the WLM protest on September 18, 2021,<sup>26</sup> also attended the "World Wide Rally for Freedom" event which occurred on the same date.<sup>27</sup> Recently, Canadian WLM groups added "Active Club" s.37 [REDACTED] where fitness routines and information about gyms not requiring proof of vaccination is being shared. Recent blogs indicate a presence of "Active Clubs" that engage with white supremacist networks also exist in the U.S.<sup>28</sup>



Open source queries and information from law enforcement partners for this reporting period yielded no specific intelligence to indicate WLM events pose a risk to public safety from protesters or counter-protesters.

### **ANTI-LOCKDOWN/ANTI-MASK/ANTI-VACCINATION PROTESTS**

*Potential for public health restriction violations. Potential for protests that could impact public or officer safety.*

Anti-vaccination sentiment continues to be the focus of protests opposed to public health restrictions with a specific focus on narratives opposing vaccine mandates and passports. This reporting period saw an increase in protests related to these issues aimed at Liberal campaign events, hospitals, schools and businesses. These types of events have attracted ideologically motivated individuals<sup>b</sup> who have promoted conspiracy theories throughout the pandemic. However, as COVID-19 continues to impact daily life, events of this nature also have the potential to attract individuals who are not aligned with any specific ideology or group, but who have experienced personal hardships due to COVID-19 and are upset with provincial or federal government responses.

Weekly protests, which have been ongoing since April of 2020, continue to occur throughout Canada, typically on weekends. On September 18, 2021, "World Wide Rally for Freedom" events that included anti-vaccine, anti-lockdown and anti-mask narratives took place in several Canadian cities. While the majority of these events were peaceful, news reports indicate that, in Toronto, a demonstrator allegedly assaulted a female in a vehicle during the protest.<sup>29</sup> Events in Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver generated online chatter due to the large number of protesters at the events.

During the election period, there was a significant increase in hostility displayed at some protests and in online rhetoric, particularly towards the target of the protest. The Prime Minister's (PM) speaking event on August 27, 2021, in Bolton, ON, for example, was cancelled by the Liberal Party due to safety concerns for Liberal supporters at the rally.<sup>30</sup> At other Liberal campaign events in Kitchener<sup>31</sup> and London, ON,<sup>32</sup> charges were laid against individuals for uttering threats against the PM and for assault with a weapon (related to an individual throwing gravel at the PM).

No major incidents of violence were reported in relation to the anti-vaccine protests that took place outside several hospitals throughout Canada during September of 2021. However, organizing groups received criticism due to the location of the protests and news media reported harassment and bullying of health care professionals.<sup>33</sup> Prior to the protests, a tweet was identified which suggested bringing firearms to a hospital,<sup>34</sup> which was investigated by the Police of Jurisdiction (PoJ). At Canada-wide hospital protests on September 13, 2021, small numbers of counter-demonstrators were observed opposing events in Ottawa, Edmonton, Toronto, and Calgary. The two former Ontario nurses involved with organizing the protests on September 1 and 13, 2021, outside Canadian hospitals had previously spoke at a rally in Washington on January 6, 2021. They have also engaged in discussions about corruption in hospitals<sup>35</sup> and promoted content highlighting skepticism of the vaccine,<sup>36</sup> which feed into narratives popular with QAnon conspiracies.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>b</sup> The presence of ideologically motivated individuals does not necessarily mean ideologically motivated criminality or ideologically motivated violence. The non-criminal ideologically motivated space includes expressions of racism, bigotry, misogyny, and individuals engaging in lawful protests.

Protests have also occurred at schools in various Canadian cities. On September 17, 2021 in Salmon Arm, BC, a “hold and secure”<sup>c</sup> order was issued in several schools after anti-vaccine protesters entered the educational facilities.<sup>38</sup> In response to hospitals and schools becoming sites of anti-vaccine protests, Quebec passed a law that will remain in effect for a 30-day period which makes it illegal to protest or organize a protest within 50 metres of schools and hospitals.<sup>39</sup> Medical clinics, mobile clinics, COVID-19 vaccination sites and testing centres are also included as part of this law and individuals can be fined between \$1,000 to \$6,000.<sup>40</sup> In addition, an injunction to prevent a protest from taking place can also be granted by a Superior Court judge.<sup>41</sup> Recent news reports indicate that British Columbia is considering adopting a similar law<sup>42</sup> and as of September 28, 2021, Alberta announced hospitals and health care facilities will now be designated as critical infrastructure, and individuals can be fined or face potential jail time for impeding access to these facilities.<sup>43 44</sup>

The implementation of vaccine passports to access non-essential activities and mandated vaccination policies implemented by some employers continue to be a focus of discussion. The IMCIT has observed an increase in rhetoric calling for “united non-compliance” specifically opposing vaccine passports, as there is a perception these passports segregate vaccinated and unvaccinated populations and are an example of “medical tyranny” and government overreach. Impromptu protests directed at specific businesses that are requiring proof of vaccination have also been observed, as have instances where groups of people are organizing online to attend various businesses (typically restaurants and food courts in malls) while recording the interactions with staff live. On September 25, 2021, two individuals were arrested and charged with assault during an anti-vaccine protest at the Eaton Centre in Toronto.<sup>45</sup> A security guard was assaulted when protesters tried to enter the mall after being denied entry.<sup>46</sup>

A “Convoy for Freedom” scheduled to arrive in Ottawa, ON, on October 6, 2021, is in its initial stages of planning.<sup>47</sup> The purpose of the event is to express opposition to vaccine passports, which are perceived as illegal, and the website suggests participants plan to remain in Ottawa until the law,<sup>d</sup> as they see it, is upheld by the federal government.<sup>48</sup> At this time, estimated participation is unclear as there are a number of barriers the organizer has faced with respect to transportation and access to hotels due to current public health regulations. It is anticipated that, due to the nature of the convoy coming from outside the province of Ontario, the IMCIT will have visibility on participation once the convoy begins from its various routes.

The IMCIT has identified a number of online factors for this reporting period that may fuel conspiracy narratives as COVID-19 continues to impact daily life:

- There has been an increase in information circulating online involving people claiming to be active or retired law enforcement and medical professionals who are opposed to the vaccine and/or mandated vaccines;
- Pseudo-legal documentation, including “notice of liability” papers have circulated in various social media networks in response to vaccine passports, employer vaccine mandates, and the

<sup>c</sup> A “hold and secure” is when exterior doors to the school are locked and students and staff are permitted to enter but once inside, no one leaves the building. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/erase/documents/maintaining-school-safety-guide.pdf>

<sup>d</sup> According to the Canada-unity.com website, the group perceives Ottawa has “abandoned the law” and vaccine passport mandates are illegally being pushed upon Canadians.

fear of future forced vaccination of children in schools. Prior to the pandemic, documents of this nature were typically only seen by those with anti-government grievances<sup>49</sup> and did not reach a wide audience;

- Social media pages dedicated to spreading stories of adverse COVID-19 vaccine reactions have increased in circulation within the past few weeks. Information from F Division indicates rhetoric directed towards a specific protest on October 2, 2021, promoted by a People's Party of Canada candidate, includes the words "giving a voice to the vaccine injured" and references to the Nuremberg Code.<sup>e</sup> References to the Nuremberg Code have been used sporadically throughout the pandemic by vaccine opponents who perceive vaccine mandates and passports as violations of consent.<sup>50</sup> The specific post has been removed, however the IMCIT has assessed that references to the Nuremberg Code persist in narratives surrounding vaccines mandates; and
- Anti-government sentiment is currently a common thread in the discourse observed in online anti-vaccine networks. Narratives indicating the government is attempting to divide Canadians to conquer them by issuing vaccine passports have been prevalent throughout this reporting period.

The IMCIT assesses that, as more provinces implement vaccine passports, these narratives and public order events will continue.

#### POST-FEDERAL ELECTION

*Potential for actions and counter-protests that could impact public or officer safety.*

The IMCIT has not identified any public order mobilizations in response to the outcome of Canada's 44<sup>th</sup> General Elections. Narratives alleging election rigging and fraud have been observed, but discussions opposing vaccine passports are currently more common than claims of election fraud.

#### THREATS TO THE COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT

Potential threats to the vaccine roll-out may occur in spontaneous incidents by dissenting or opportunistic individuals. On September 20, 2021, a man allegedly assaulted a nurse at a vaccine clinic in Sherbrooke, QC upon learning that his wife received the vaccine at this site.<sup>51</sup> On September 16, 2021, a vaccine clinic in Winnipeg, MB reported possible theft of the vaccine after a box of vaccine doses was missing.<sup>52</sup> In addition, attempts to falsify vaccination records have been reported by healthcare workers in New Brunswick<sup>53</sup> and Alberta<sup>54</sup>.

The IMCIT has no new information, however, to indicate any coordinated attempts to sabotage or disrupt the vaccine supply chain or its transport.

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<sup>e</sup> The Nuremberg Code refers to a set of research ethics developed after German doctors conducted unethical human experimentation during the Second World War. It and has been used by COVID-19 vaccine opponents throughout the pandemic to argue that vaccines violate the Nuremberg Code <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/no-covid-19-vaccines-do-not-violate-the-nuremberg-code-1.5576156>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/lobster-catch-destroyed-vehicle-burned-as-tension-rises-over-indigenous-fishery-in-n-s-1.5144540>

<sup>2</sup> <https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/n-s-mi-kmaq-fisher-says-his-movements-are-being-watched-and-his-traps-seized-by-dfo-1.5434949>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/nova-scotia-first-nation-treaty-fishery-monday-1.6140089>

<sup>4</sup> <https://globalnews.ca/news/8178587/sipeknekatik-fishery-assembly-of-first-nations-solidarity/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/rcmp-charge-arson-fish-plant-fire-1.6169593>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-federal-officials-change-tactics-as-lobster-fishing-fight-heats-up-in/>

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<sup>8</sup> <https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/nova-scotia-lobster-fishermen-protest-out-of-control-first-nations-fishery-1.5106027>

<sup>9</sup> <https://lethbridgenewsnow.com/2021/09/20/liberal-fisheries-minister-bernadette-jordan-loses-re-election-bid/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://vancouverisland.ctvnews.ca/b-c-judge-denies-extension-of-fairy-creek-injunction-against-old-growth-logging-protesters-1.5604147>

<sup>11</sup> <https://bc-cb.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=2130&languageId=1&contentId=71451>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/fairy-creek-protest-largest-act-of-civil-disobedience-1.6168210>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/singh-faces-fairy-creek-tmx-demonstrators-election-2021-1.6178900>

<sup>14</sup> <https://bc-cb.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=2130&languageId=1&contentId=71335>

<sup>15</sup> <https://bc-cb.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=2130&languageId=1&contentId=71254>

<sup>16</sup> <https://bc-cb.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=2130&languageId=1&contentId=71033>

<sup>17</sup> <https://bc-cb.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=2130&languageId=1&contentId=71034>

<sup>18</sup> <https://bc-cb.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=2130&languageId=1&contentId=71077>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/CUY8qNiFYtK/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/judge-denies-application-to-extend-injunction-against-protests-at-fairy-creek-1.6192827>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/events/306731521233715/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://globalnews.ca/news/8221064/extinction-rebellion-vancouver-climate-change/>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-58130705>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/09/24/fridays-future-greta-climate-protests/>

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/PatriotGusCanada/posts/262169352436408>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.adl.org/blog/active-clubs-americas-white-supremacist-fight-club>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.cp24.com/news/woman-charged-after-assault-during-anti-vaccine-protest-in-downtown-toronto-1.5591874>

<sup>30</sup> IMCIT TA 01 -- 2021-09-02

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/kitchener-man-charged-over-trudeau-threat-1.6171716>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/shane-marshall-people-s-party-gravel-trudeau-1.6172690>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/covid-hospital-protests-canada-1.6173437>

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.vice.com/en/article/bvxy9q/covid-conspiracy-nurses-among-those-who-spoke-at-trumps-violent-dc-rally>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.vice.com/en/article/bvxy9q/covid-conspiracy-nurses-among-those-who-spoke-at-trumps-violent-dc-rally>

<sup>37</sup> IMCIT TA 04 -- 2021-09-15



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- <sup>38</sup> <https://www.citynews1130.com/2021/09/17/bc-salmon-arm-anti-vaccine-protest-schools/>
- <sup>39</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/special-bill-protests-schools-hospitals-vaccination-covid-1.6186744>
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>42</sup> <https://bc.ctvnews.ca/b-c-considering-tougher-laws-to-protect-patients-students-from-anti-vaccine-protesters-1.5598133>
- <sup>43</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/alberta-bans-anti-vaccination-protests-all-other-demonstrations-outside-health-care-facilities-1.6192259>
- <sup>44</sup> <https://chatnewstoday.ca/2021/09/28/alberta-makes-protests-at-health-care-sites-illegal-two-more-covid-19-deaths-in-medicine-hat/>
- <sup>45</sup> <http://torontopolice.on.ca/newsreleases/51046>
- <sup>46</sup> <https://nationalpost.com/news/toronto/two-people-charged-with-assault-after-anti-vaccine-protest-at-toronto-mall>
- <sup>47</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CanadaUnity/posts/949634995894753/>
- <sup>48</sup> <http://canada-unity.ca/canada-unity-convoy/>
- <sup>49</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/anti-vaccine-pseudolegal-freemen-on-the-land-1.6188648>
- <sup>50</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=10166025907775436&set=a.379559545435>
- <sup>51</sup> <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/police-in-sherbrooke-que-searching-for-man-who-allegedly-punched-nurse-for-vaccinating-his-wife-1.5595631>
- <sup>52</sup> <https://globalnews.ca/news/8195636/winnipeg-covid-19-vaccine-theft/>
- <sup>53</sup> <https://globalnews.ca/news/8227825/horizon-health-network-people-to-requests-falsified-covid-vaccination-records/>
- <sup>54</sup> <https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/we-are-at-a-critical-time-albertas-top-doctor-asking-people-to-follow-health-measures-after-reports-of-fake-vaccine-records>